

Burkina Faso

Dano, Ioba province

For further information:

- a) Artisanal Gold Council press release on Burkina Faso pilot Hg-free processing plant and training center
- b) Video about the plant: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNwILvWDWGI>

Favorable conditions on the ground:

- Early commitment to the project by miners' groups, government authorities, and other stakeholders
- A well-planned site for the processing system and training center assisted in the logistics of the project
- AGC had built up its presence in Burkina Faso by working with various stakeholders to understand the sector, train miners, and create awareness

A pilot Hg-free processing system and training center provide a comprehensive model to reduce the environmental and health impacts of the ASGM sector

Existing process:

Various Hg-emitting processes evaporate into the air without controls, leading to occupational and community exposures. Inefficient milling systems that create clouds of dust lead to acute pulmonary exposures to fine particles, greatly increasing the chances of developing silicosis and other lung diseases. In some cases, illegal and uncontrolled use of cyanide contaminates groundwater.

Intervention:

A pilot Hg-free gold processing system and training center equipped with a crusher, wet pan mill, and shaking table

The training center is equipped with a chemical-free, low dust, high recovery system that is low-cost and highly intuitive to use, making it easily trusted and operated by different groups of miners with little technical experience. An integral part of the project includes health training and awareness activities for workers and local health practitioners. Moreover, the center will serve as a Hg-free model that the ASGM sector can learn from and replicate: training modules and site visits are being organized to give demonstrations to miners and other groups from around the country. During these sessions, groups will learn how to eliminate the use of Hg economically as well as how to improve mining practices to the benefit of the whole community.

Outcomes:

- Elimination of all Hg use
- Enhanced gold recovery
- Chemical-free, low dust production, and ease of operation improves health and environmental safety outcomes
- Greater awareness of the health benefits of not using Hg: trainings and demonstrations are provided to local and regional communities
- Model strengthens business practices while enabling more transparency and legality in the supply chain



Reasons for success

The Artisanal Gold Council's approach of minimal disruption maintains respect and recognition of the existing socioeconomic structures on mining sites. The new system was easily adopted because it worked within local boundaries already in place. Miners were therefore more willing to engage and trust the system. The AGC's approach also made logistics (permitting, transportation, shipping, etc.) much smoother.

Close collaboration with multiple stakeholders such as the Government of Burkina Faso and the Burkina Faso Miners Syndicate— a national grassroots miner organization— made the site an ideal location to develop a demonstration system and training center. Funding from USDoS, UNIDO, and GEF was critical for the implementation phase of the pilot project.

The comprehensive nature of the model—pilot Hg-free processing system, training center, and health awareness activities— allowed AGC to tackle all aspects of the ASGM problem. Thus, this pilot project is able to serve as a model for future interventions made at the national level.